

Houston Planning Commission
Suburban Subcommittee Meeting
Monday, September 29, 2005
Summary

Attendance:

Robert Heinemen, Zane Segal, Clark Martinson, Clark Martinson, Joel Marshall, Zane Segal, Steve Spillette, Antonio Flamenco, Jeffrey Brown, Jerold Winograd

Handouts: Amenities Plan memo; Reserves Matrix

Discussion:

Amenities Plan

- Draft recommendations do not address size. In particular, small marshy detention facilities are not likely to be maintained or used as amenities.
- Geometry is also important. A long narrow ditch may be useful for detention purposes but is not adequate to be counted as open space.
- Duration to drain. Facilities that take days to drain are not adequate as open space amenities.

Next Step: Antonio Flamenco and Zane Segal will draft proposed criteria for amenities plans.

Reserves Matrix

Ordinance language pertaining to reserves is unclear and, in some instances, may discourage beneficial uses.

Variance requests from the following rules are common:

- 60' right of way (ROW) for water and waste water pump stations and compensating open space
- Reserves must front on public street

Proposed changes to ordinance:

- Allow 50' ROW frontage for pump stations (size fo road should be adequate for utility purposes.
- Allow Department of Public Works and Engineering to prescribe size of site for pump stations
- Public Street frontage not necessary; however, access easement should be required.

Next Steps:

Planning Department to consult with PWE regarding size of parcel required for utility pump stations.

Open Space and Street Layout

Two years ago, Planning Commission embraced a concept allowing single family residential units to front on green space and take vehicular access from 20' public alleys with 10' or 0' set backs. Changes to the ordinance were proposed to allow such development to occur without requiring variance requests. Over time, however, the concept was modified so that the quantity of greenspace provided was greatly reduced.

Proposed criteria:

- Connectivity via greenbelts should be provided
- Size of greenspace should be ratio of depth to width
- Width of greenspace may be function of building height (prevent canyon effects)
- 0' setbacks are allowed
- Faces of opposing buildings forming a courtyard must be at least 25'.

Town Centers

Draft ordinance focusing on greenfields development was prepared and reviewed by working group.

Proposed criteria:

- Organizational capacity must be established (Management District, etc.)
- Conceptual plan for area must be created
- Process must be driven by property owners
- Establish performance standards such as a minimum number of uses and stories

Next Steps: working group to meet with Director to further discuss draft ordinance, including infill or redevelopment opportunities. Also, Planning Department to provide copy of performance standards from 1992 Zoning Ordinance.

Next Meeting: November 7, 2005 at 4 p.m.